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U.S., Rebutting Columnist, Sees a Soviet Threat in Iran

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 25 — Defense Department intelligence specialists have concluded that an American military assault against Iran would probably lead the Soviet Union to send forces into the country, Government officials said today.

The officials cited the intelligence assessment to discredit reports last week that the Carter Administration was actively contemplating a military strike against Iran in mid-October. The reports,

prepared by Jack Anderson, the syndicated columnist, were denied by the White House and the Pentagon.

Officials said the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency was asked to examine how the Soviet Union was likely to respond to American military actions against Iran. The agency, they said, concluded that although Moscow was unlikely to react to a small-scale rescue operation such as the one attempted in April, there was a good chance it would respond to a major assault by moving forces into northern Iran.

In a similar study, the Central Intelligence Agency was said by one official to have taken "a more relaxed attitude" toward the prospects for Soviet military intervention, but it, too, is reported to have concluded that this possibility could not be ruled out.

The findings of the two agencies are said by officials to have led President Carter and his senior aides to rule out military action against Iran, barring a significant worsening in the treatment of the hostages.

In five columns last week, Mr. Ander-

son charged that Mr. Carter "was rushing ahead with plans to invade Iran" in order "to save himself from almost certain defeat" in the November Presidential election.

A War Game in June

Mr. Anderson said several "jigsaw pieces" suggested that a large action against Iran was being prepared. He said these included a decision by Mr. Carter in February to have a surveillance satellite positioned over Iran, the movement of a squadron of F-4 fighters and about 500 support personnel to Egypt, the installation of "ultrasecret" communications equipment in Egypt and the deployment of six container ships full of military equipment to the Indian Ocean.

Officials said that after the hostages were seized in November, several contingency plans were drawn up for strikes against Iran, including attacks against the country's oil installations. They reported, however, that since the rescue attempt these contingency plans had received only passing attention.

Some officials suggested that Mr. Anderson might have obtained details of a Pentagon "war game" in June known as Positive Leap. In the exercise, senior military commanders are said to have tested the capacity of American air, naval and ground forces to intervene promptly in a conflict in Iran.

While denying that any military move against Iran was being prepared, one defense aide said that some senior military officers had expressed concern that Mr. Carter could be tempted to order a military show of force before November to strengthen his domestic political standing.

At the State Department, officials reacted cautiously to an announcement today by the militants at the American Embassy in Teheran that any military move against Iran could result in the death of the hostages. State Department officials speculated that the statement was provoked, in part, by the Anderson articles.